

March 12, 2009

The Mental Health Position of the Montana League of Women Voters supports the establishment and maintenance of effective community based mental health services, treating the mentally ill with dignity and providing them with a supportive social environment.

We followed and were most impressed by the work of the Interim Committee on Law and Justice and their proposals found in HB 130, 131 and 132, designed to provide less costly and better patient outcomes with humane community care, close to family, friends and jobs.

We understand that after strong support in House Judiciary Committee, the bills were sent to House Appropriations and had good hearings in your subcommittee but when they went back to the full committee, they were faced with a need to cut any new funding. We believe that the concept and proposed programs are so important that they must be saved.

We join with others who are asking:

**That the full Appropriations Committee approve HB130, 131 and 132 amended to remove mandatory state funding.

**That HB 645 include one time funding as appropriate to get these programs started.

**That the bills be approved in House Appropriations and considered by the House along with other "cats and dogs".

**That whatever coordination or contingency language is necessary be included in the bills.

We ask you to recognize the years of work that have gone into developing a workable mental health system for our communities and for Montana. These bills will provide a significant step in building that system.

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